

North Carolina Cost Share Programs Review Summary

FY2021

County	<u>Greene</u>	Date of Previous Review/Report	<u></u>
District Staff Name(s)	<u>Rodney Taylor, Dawn Keel</u>	Date	<u>11/9/2020</u>
NRCS Staff Name(s)	<u></u>		
Division Representative(s)	<u>Lisa Fine, Kristina Fischer</u>		<u></u>
Additional Participants	<u>Josh Vetter</u>		<u></u>

Questions	Division Findings				Division Comments	District Plan of Action Required		SWCD Plan of Action	Proposed Timeline for Implementation	Division Response to Plan of Action (date)
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Section 1: Application Procedures and Tracking Progress (BMP Implementation and Payments) Questions in this section focus on how the district advertises the program, how applications are developed, how contracts are developed, how funds are tracked and how the board approves each.										
How/when are the district board meetings scheduled?				X	Meetings are the first Tuesday of the month at 8:00 a.m. and are held unless there is no quorum. If that happens, they change the date and give appropriate notice.		X			
How do you notify the public of the board meeting schedule? Does it adhere to the Open Meetings Law?				X	Meeting dates and time are posted on the office door, courthouse bulletin board and on the website.		X			

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Please describe the district's process for providing assistance to applicants by assessing resource concerns to determine if a BMP is "needed and feasible" and then developing the conservation plan.				X	The ad that the district has funds is put out, some applicants walk in and some phone. District staff goes to visit the site to see if there is a resource concern. If the district feels they are eligible, they let the people know they need to fill out the application and they then get ranked and a conservation plan is written along with CPA 52. Then on to the contract creation from that.		X			
Does the district provide technical assistance without cost share funds?				X	Yes.		X			
What type of technical assistance is provided without cost share funds?				X	Drain tile, grassed swale/waterways, French drains (housing developments)		X			
How does the district prioritize which applicants get funded? Do you prioritize certain watersheds, BMPs, type of operation, first come - first served, etc?				X	The district highlights a resource concern like erosion, distance to streams, targeted watersheds, VAD. These get more points. Not first come first served. 303d list gets points for Impaired Impacted funds.		X			
Once each application is considered, what does the district do with the score? Do you fund based on the score, use another system to prioritize, create eligibility categories, or other?				X	District has a score of 100 points. Any lower scoring contracts are batched in a later meeting. Batching periods are July – September and then November to February. Contracts are funded based on score.		X			

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Describe the process the district follows when there is a tie on applicants' scores.				X	The application date is used to break ties.		X			
Does the district purposefully withhold a percentage of funds until a later date in the program year to be able to fund higher quality projects (more water quality or water quantity benefits) or does the district fund applications until it runs out of funding each batching period? Does the district automatically fund cooperators who applied but did not get funded in the previous program year due to lack of funds or does it re-rank them with new applications?				X	In the past the district has set aside money for this. This year they decided not to hold any funds back. There are no events causing a major ag problem that they know of this year – hurricanes, flooding, etc... so they didn't see the need to hold anything back. Rodney and the board members check in with cooperators to see how storms effect farm/erosion. Covid is affecting available funds this year too in that they have a lot left over after their first batch. No, the district does not automatically fund contracts from the previous year. They are reranked.		X			

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Are applications, contracts and requests for payments reviewed and approved by the Board as a separate action item?		X			Most of the minutes I reviewed had this done correctly. There were some that seemed incomplete so I was not sure if they were done correctly during the meeting. Recommendation: division staff have put together a template to use for how minutes should be recorded regarding cost share and other division items. The district should start following that template for future meeting minutes. Template sent via email to district.	X		The Greene SWCD staff has reviewed the meeting minutes template sent from the division and has agreed to adjust minutes like template.	immediately	Plan of Action accepted.
Are application, contracts and requests for payments motions/decisions recorded in the board minutes?					Most of the ones I reviewed were recorded in the minutes but there were some that seemed incomplete as far as recording goes as well. See above.					
Has your district delegated signature authority for requests for payments to be approved outside of board meetings? How are they recorded in your board meeting minutes?				X	Yes, the chairman is the signatory outside of meetings and then alternate is the vice-chair. If this is done it is discussed during the board meeting. Not sure if it is noted that RFPs were signed outside of board meeting.		X			
Applicants are limited when applying for incentive BMPs. How does your district track applicants so they do not go over the practice caps and to be sure they haven't already "adopted" the practice?	X				Clients sign the self-certification form. District also has a folder with all cooperators who have had incentives. Commendation: the district is commended for the tracking system in place to prevent overspending on these practices.		X			


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If multiple partners farm together, how does the district track individual applicants as one operation or entity?				X	The district staff know the county farmers. They can use the FSA number if needed. Can use the incentive folder mentioned above.		X			
At what point in the application process does the district develop the contract? (After Ranking, After Application Approved?) Describe this process.	X				District completes a site visit to check the resource concern, gets info, application process begins, applications are ranked, once application is approved by the board then the conservation planning begins, staff meets with farmer to check interest and then contract will be completed. Commendation: the district is commended for their contract development process and documentation.		X			
Describe how the district reviews the contract with the applicant. Do you explain that work cannot begin until the contract is approved by the division?				X	Staff meet with applicant after the contract is approved to let them know it's approved and will meet with contractor as well. Information about starting work is given at this time.		X			
What procedures do you follow for notifying the applicant that work can begin?				X	See above		X			
Describe the district/board's procedure for approving supervisor contracts.				X	Supervisors would be ranked like all other applicants and not given points or have points taken away. No supervisor contracts found.		X			


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Is it documented in the Board minutes that the supervisor abstained from discussing his/her own contract and from voting?				X	There were no supervisor contracts identified. However, the district is aware of the process of how to do supervisor contracts.		X			
Is each contract reviewed in detail with the board before approval? Do you project CS2?				X	Yes, contracts are discussed in detail with the board. No, the district does not project CS2 to review contracts at board meetings. District does go over some reports especially when doing the strategic plan.		X			
What information do you provide the applicant?				X	The applicant is provided a copy of the contract, maps, job sheets, most of the contract file.		X			
What technical assistance do you provide during the BMP installation process to ensure the BMP is installed correctly and by the contract deadline?				X	The district does the pre-job survey, pre-construction meeting, makes notes, does check out. They are not involved in the construction of practices. Deadlines are discussed during preconstruction.		X			
How do you track the Commission’s interim performance milestone? One-third of the work must be completed within 12 months of division approval. Are you using CS2?		X			The district tracks this by the spreadsheet. Rodney is aware of when the contracts were approved and knows when the date is approaching or to check it. He is “hands on” so he is in touch frequently to stay on top of installation. Recommendation: the district should add a column to their spreadsheet that has the 1/3 date in it so the spreadsheet can be reviewed for that date to see when it’s	X		The Greene SWCD staff plans on adjusted spreadsheet to add a section for the 1/3 date to be recorded.	immediately	Plan of Action accepted.


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					approaching.					
If 1/3 of the work has not been completed within 12 months and the cooperators requests additional time, is the district recording 6-month extensions in the board minutes?				X	Due to the hands-on approach of the district this process has not been needed. Contracts were either cancelled or completed.		X			
What documentation do you include in the contract file that certifies that the BMP was inspected and is installed to the standards?		X			Conservation notes includes all of the process through completion. Job Sheets will also have information on them about the installation. Copies of field book notes referencing check out are also sometimes included. Recommendation: before and after pics can be used to document BMPs as well.	X		Greene SWCD Staff will begin taking picture before and after BMP is installed.	immediately	Plan of Action accepted.
Are BMPs measured then certified before the request for payment is approved? How is this documented?				X	Yes, the field book and job sheets are used.		X			
Section 2: Spot Checks and Compliance Issues Questions in this section focus on how the district reviews BMPs for compliance and how maintenance and/or non-compliance issues are addressed.										
Are all BMPs under the waste management category spot checked for the first five years after installation? This applies to all farms that fall under the thresholds that are regulated by DWR.				X	Yes, the spreadsheet lists practices for waste projects and dates so they can be picked for spot checks easily.		X			
How does the district notify the NRCS area office or division to conduct spot checks for contracts that need to be spot checked by someone outside of the district? (Refer to Spot Check Policy)				X	The district has not had this but would contact Carl Kirby to take a look and then send technical request to Area Office and set up a review if needed.		X			


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How does your district notify individuals that have BMPs that are out of compliance or need maintenance? (Refer to Non-Compliance Policy)		X			The district contacts the cooperator and lets them know they are out of compliance and how it needs to be repaired. It is documented in the contract file notes. Recommendation: the division staff recommends the district send letters to cooperators when they are first found out of compliance or needing maintenance on a contract. See policy link in question.	X		The Greene SWCD does send letters when there is a major problem with BMP being out of compliance, however when it is something minor that can be repaired fairly simple we make verbal contact to client to get it fixed. The Greene SWCD will send letters out if a contract is out of compliance.	immediately	Plan of action accepted. If BMP is out-of-compliance, a letter should be sent to the cooperator per compliance policy . A copy of the letter should be forwarded to the division specialist.
How are supervisors notified of BMPs that are out of compliance or need maintenance at any time throughout the year?				X	This is discussed at the board meetings or they are called to make them aware of it.		X			
Does the district provide a written notice that the BMP must be repaired or re-implemented within 30 working days? (Vegetative practices have to be reestablished within one calendar year.) Is a copy of the notification kept in the contract file?					Normally the cooperator is not sent a letter the first time but if on recheck they contact again and send a letter. Not a big problem in their district due to the hands-on approach. Yes, a copy of the letter is put in the contract file and it's put in the contract notes. See above recommendation.					
If the BMP was not repaired or re-implemented, was repayment requested? Please provide documentation: contract numbers and/or names.				X	The district has not had to ask for a refund. District is aware of the refund calculator.		X			


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Is the district notifying the division of non-compliance and resolutions?				X	Yes, the district would notify the division if they have any issues. Have not had any that Rodney can recall.		X			
Section 3: Record Keeping Questions in this section focus on how funds are managed and accounted for, maintaining proper design and job approval authority, as well as disclosure forms.										
Do you use the CS2 reports to show the board available program funds, encumbrances and expenditures?				X	No, the district uses their spreadsheet to show the board balances. They use CS2 for the audit.		X			
How are technical assistance and operating funds tracked? Are they audited? What is the date of the last audit? Who performed the audit?				X	The board does an audit once a year. Money for salary goes to the county so the district does not audit that. Dawn will get info from the county for me on the county audit.		X	The district already provided this documentation before the review was complete. No further information is required.		No further plan of action is needed.
Who in the office does work for Cost Share Programs?				X	Rodney is paid but Carl Kirby also helps with cost share programs.		X			
Is proper job approval authority (JAA) documented for each technical and cost share position? Please provide a copy of the latest approved JAA. (Print a copy of what is in the data base. Does it match the district's version?)				X	Yes. I reviewed the JAA for Rodney from the Strategy Plan for 2021.		X			


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Section 4: Contract Reviews and Site Visits Below is a list of the contracts the division reviewed. Spot checks were also conducted. Notes include recommendations and/or corrective action for contract files as well as the BMP. Contracts/BMPs are listed by contract number.										
Contract Number: 40-2019-008 Applicant Name: James Stroud BMP: grassed waterway 				X	No concerns with BMP and no concerns with contract file.		X			

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Contract Number: 40-2019-001 Applicant Name: Bynum Farms BMP: field border 				X	No concerns with BMP and no concerns with contract file.		X			

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Contract Number: 40-2012-004 Applicant Name: John Relyea BMP: field border 				X	No concerns with BMP and no concerns with contract file.		X			

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Contract Number: 40-2017-003 Applicant Name: Edward Thornton BMP: grassed waterway, diversions 		X			Recommendation: Grassed Waterway needs reshaping and reseeding. Diversions look good and appear to be functioning correctly.	X		The Greene SWCD Staff has already meet with client and discuss this. The client was aware of this already and had talked to us about it, he plans to repair it as soon as weather allows, and it dries out enough for him to do the work.	As soon as weather permits	Plan of Action accepted. District should send pictures and document when the grassed waterway has been repaired.

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Contract Number: 40-2020-008 Applicant Name: Harrison Farms BMP: cropland conversion to grass 				X	No concerns with BMP and no concerns with contract file.		X			

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<p>Contract Number: 40-2016-801 repair contract is 40-2020-101 Applicant Name: Gary Askew BMP: Ag pond repair/retrofit</p> 					<p>The pond system is not functioning as intended. There is a repair contract already for this pond to repair the spillway. The parts that the division paid for on this contract are present, but the “system” cannot function until the spillway is repaired. The district should inform the division cost share specialist when this work is complete and provide pics of the “after” of the site from contract 40-2020-101. As of December 8th work had not begun. I am putting this as a recommendation just for follow-up. The district is already doing what they need to do.</p>		X	<p>No need to respond since the process is already in place to repair the system - Just provide me pics and documentation when this is repaired or as part of that contract’s reference material at time of payment.</p>		<p>No further plan of action is required. The spillway is being repaired as part of another contract 40-2020-101 and after that the “system” should be functioning.</p>
<p>General Contract Summary</p>		X			<p>The district should begin to print out division approval of contracts and attach that in the contract file folder near the conservation notes.</p>	X		<p>The Greene SWCD already prints out the letter from division but puts it in the contract section of the folder but can be adjusted to the note section if needed.</p>		<p>Some files that were reviewed did not contain the email. District can continue to put it in the contract section. No</p>

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										further action required.